CHAPTER THREE

Persons in Islamicate Philosophy from Ibn Sīnā to Sabzavārī

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The word person conjures up the idea of an irreducibly unique individual. As natural as this association may appear to us, it hides developments that have been under way for two-and-a-half millennia. Neither uniqueness nor individuality decisively establishes the personhood of a person. Each number also is unique, though this did not prevent number and numerical relation from being used to clarify the problem of creation, another example of uniqueness.[1] Indeed, the same word for

1 Al-Kindī was one of the first to take philosophical interest in number theory, followed by al-Fārābī, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* (Brethren of Purity), and Ibn Sīnā. When algebra, which began in Arabic linguistics, developed into a distinct field, its applications helped unknot philosophical problems like the one-and-many. For example, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) derived a form of reasoning from combinatory analysis, the basis of algebra and algorithm, to explain the emanation of the intellects without contradicting the principle that *one* can only yield *one* (especially in *Al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt ma'a Sharḥ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī* [Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1960], 3:217-18). Centuries later Ṣadrā wrote his important commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *Ilāhiyyāt*, which contains a section on number and the one-and-many (*Sharḥ va ta'līqāt-e Ilāhiyyāt-e Shifā'* (Freiburg a.N, Germany: Manchūrāt al-Jamal, 2011), 318-45. However, no one claimed that formalized language alone could solve philosophical problems. Roshdi Rashed's landmark study offers valuable

distinct individual and odd number, *fard*, is also synonymous with differentia and existence. It should not be conflated with *nafs* (self, soul, *mental* interiority, person) or *shakhṣ* (person, particular).

The medieval period brought the concept of personhood more clearly than ever within the purview of philosophical inquiry. One is accustomed to read into such inquiry the same explanatory intent that one expects from a specialized science. But Ḥikma criticized the litigious side of *Kalām* (dialectical theology) without having to turn to its own branch sciences for justification.[2] It did so for much the same reason it took early *Falsafa* to task: overreliance on theoretical discourse undermined the certainty coveted by philosophers. Let us then avoid terms like "psychology," "cosmology," or even "metaphysics" when speaking of personhood and existence.

Before continuing, there are several points to consider. First, I shall rely on Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274) for guidance because he was pivotal in setting the course of Ḥikma after the passing of its main founders—al-Fārābī (d. 950 or 951), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), Suhravardī (d. 1191), and Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240). He begins by asking about what thinking seeks but is incapable of achieving on its own without, on the one hand, proper verification (*taḥqīq*) through demonstrative proof (*burhān*) and on the other realization (*taḥaqquq*), the station at which truth finds its confirmation as an actualization of being. While both words are derived from *ḥaqq* (truth, right), *taḥaqquq* is an emphatic

insights into philosophy's relationship with mathematics (cf. introduction and conclusion, *D'Al-Khwārizmī à Descartes. Étude sur l'histoire des mathématiques classiques* [Paris: Hermann, 2011]).

2 I use *Ḥikma, Islamicate* philosophy, and *ʿIlm al-ḥikma* (science of philosophy) interchangeably. The medieval philosophers did not designate their activities additionally as "Islamic." "Islamicate" better reflects Ḥikma's proper soil: a global, multiconfessional civilization and a historical period. See Anthony F. Shaker, *Modernity, Civilization and the Return to History* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2017), 10–15, 224. I also include *Falsafa*, the earliest form of philosophy there. Although founded by al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, and Ibn Sīnā, it counted among its practitioners many eastern Christian scholars, medical thinkers, and translators of Greek. But it was al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā who transformed the ancient Peripatetic approach into the kernel of a vast new philosophical tradition. All three philosophers were key to the development of philosophical theology among the Latin Schoolmen.

verbal noun that means "making real," though technically in Ḥikma, "real" does not have the empirical connotation it usually does today. What follows will give a sense of *taḥaqquq*'s full scope.

Where theoretical proof cannot fully demonstrate something, free of the "doubts of thinking," denying the thing on this account need not imply its nonexistence: a statement of denial does not exclude its *existential* affirmative.[3] So, where does this leave the rational faculty (*quwwa nāṭiqa*) and the means at its disposal? Alluding to Ibn Sīnā's characterization of the rational or thinking faculty as an attribute of "spirit" (*ṣifa rūḥāniyya*), Qūnawī ascribes its limitations to the taint of multiplicity. The human intellect arranges everything of a sensory and imaginative nature with the aid of the faculty of common sense (*ḥiss mushtarak, sensus communis*), the first unity of all the senses that prepares for thought and judgment. The objective behind this familiar scheme is not to render the rational faculty amenable to the test of observation or to give induction pride of place but to illustrate the immateriality required of intellection free of matter. That matter includes the very means—speech, proposition, logic, and so on—by which one thinks. Spirit on the other hand is regarded as a source of permanence. It both signifies the possibility of truthful affirmation and adumbrates the selfhood in its sameness belonging to the person to whom thinking is ascribed.

Second, the word *ḥikma* means simply wisdom—like *sophia* without the prefix *philo* (love) in the Greek *philo-sophia* (in Aristotle, from the fact that "all men desire to know"; *Metaphysics* 980a21). "*Ḥikma*" is said to be one of the attributes that human beings share with God. This opened up an interesting problematic about divine knowledge that was noted by Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 983a1–11) but that Islamicate philosophy brought to a head resisting the temptation to theorize things into either existence or nothingness. That Aristotle's "most

3 Qūnawī, *I'jāz al-bayān* (Qom, Iran: Mu'assasseh-ye Bustān-e Kitāb-e Qom, 1423 AH), 22–23.

divine science" approximated divine knowledge did not imply that its attainment was possible simply by imitating the divine attributes, as the ethical literature and *Kalām* (dialectical theology) had it, much less by reason alone. What process there was came to be understood as an exchange of like attributes by way of consonance (*munāsaba*) at any given level of knowledge and existence. Ibn Sīnā reckoned—with Aristotle—that the First Cause was the most universalizing for knowledge (*ʿilm*). This meant that only at a universal level was the knowledge of causality *theoretically* conceivable as the "meeting point" between divine knowledge and human cognizance (*maʿrifa*). But when science (also *ʿilm*) referred not specifically to the attribute of knowledge man shared with God but to a second order of knowledge, then it was not be quite that by means of which one may lay claim to a knowledge of the "realities of things" (*ḥaqā'iq al-ashyā'*) as they are in themselves.

Third, specialized sciences like mathematics and physics impinge upon systematic philosophy, a good example of which is al-Fārābī's commentary on Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*. How for instance do the principles that account for a moving body aid in understanding soul and intellect's movement from potentiality to actuality? There is an inverse relation between the simplicity of intellect *in actu* and the manifoldness of the potential intellect with which human beings are first born. The one and the many are incommensurable. Aristotle argued that life itself was a self-driven movement of actualization from a state of potentiality, in the manner of a natural, uninterrupted course of an "unmoved mover."[4] Therefore, that the soul need not move just because the body moved entailed that life was self-guided. Yet, something more is needed to account for the intellect's guidance of the soul in matters of the body. A mere self-*generating* organism would suggest that the many could generate the one.

4 *De Anima* 412a, 3–4, 6–7.

The word *ṣhakhṣ* has nuanced connotations that range from *person* (its primary meaning) rooted in something greater to the particular subsumed by the universal. A red thing is a particular of the color red, since "red" is normally said of a *thing* (*shay'*). But Ibn Sīnā was vexed by the Peripatetics' inability to reason their way to the particular (*tashakhkhuṣ*; lit.: personification). On his view, the old Peripatetic language no longer sufficed. Far from denying theory and thinking their role, though, he kept their path open to "higher" modes of knowledge that he bequeathed to posterity to explore in greater depth.[5]

Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (c. 1571/2–1640)—also known as Ṣadrā or Mullā Ṣadrā—treats thoughts as the modality (*kayfiyya nafsāniyya*) that prepares the soul for the intellective beholding (*li-mushāhada ʿaqliyya*) and the telling (*ḥikāya*) of a thing's universal reality.[6] Sensation is to intellective sensation what a living being of the flesh is to his or her living being of the intellect. The inner senses perceive that which is hidden about things and resists proof, thanks to the person's intellective being, which emanates its light upon his lower being through intermediary levels. Thus, man is not distinct from other animals because of the unifying function of the common sense, which he shares with them, but because of intellect.[7] Intellect alone allows him, at the very least, to perceive what is beneficial and what is harmful.

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5 None of Ibn Sīnā's extant writings explain what he understood by *al-ḥikma al-ishrāqiyya* (the Philosophy of Illumination) and *ishrāq* (illumination), although *Al-Shifā', Al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt,* and some minor works provide unmistakable evidence. The idea of *ishrāq* is based on the light metaphor, thus closely associated with *mashriq* (the east whence the sun rises), and the *mashriqiyyūn* are those who follow the path of illumination, for whom logic and language are only preparatory. Suhravardī, in *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (The Philosophy of Illumination), expressly aimed to complete Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, and personhood is central to his arguments. He and Ibn ʿArabī argued that what one perceives in "self-awareness" is nothing but the essence of the thing itself according to the modalities of its appearances. Peter Adamson presents some useful, if narrowly focused, arguments in "Non-discursive Thought in Avicenna's Commentary on the *Theology of Aristotle*," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam,* ed. J. McGinnis (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 87–111.

6 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya* (Qum: Būstān-e Kitāb Qum, 2003 or 2004), 271.

7 Ṣadrā, *Al-Mabdā' wa'l-maʿād* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1976), 212–213.

Ṣadrā uses the purposiveness and utilities of the sensory organs to argue for a paradigm (*unmūzaj*) that best befits man's being in the world, without having to reduce the human being to the matter from which he is composed and which particularizes him as an individual. The self survives as the same person from moment to moment despite its material changes, both external and internal. However, Ṣadrā does not consider this the best way to pose the question of man's being in philosophy. He sets out to show that the self moves according to what he calls perfection-in-substance (*ḥaraka fi'l-istikmāl al-jawharī*), based on his famous theory of motion-in-substance and the essential modulation of being, which theory decisively leaves behind the immovability of the Peripatetics' "substance." At most, then, the argument from perception serves as a prolegomenon to the weightier core issues of Ḥikma, a paradigm according to which the divine purpose for the human quest for wisdom may be more generally understood to unfold.

Finally, from al-Fārābī up to Ṣadrā, "wisdom" is inextricably linked to the power of thinking and speech that belongs to man in the world but—on account of the intellect—who is *not of the world*. It was agreed that this power is what drives human collaborative behavior. Far from insinuating an ethical conception of knowledge, therefore, Ṣadrā's formulation anchors this interpretation to an essential characteristic of thinking's structure: knowledge is not indifferent to man's being. He is very clear that the paradigm makes explicit the "structuring" of what God has given to every human being by way of perception.[8] In this respect, talk of perception is paradigmatically significant rather than psychologically explanatory. It is important to note, further, that Ḥikma sought incessantly to decipher the enigma of man as subject and agent, not just as an object of inquiry in the manner of Ibn Khaldūn's positive science of society. Man was thus part of the single unfolding

8 Ṣadrā, *Al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*, 213.

of divine knowing *and* being from whence each person received his or her unique individuality and social being.

One chapter cannot do justice to the connections between personhood and the core issues of philosophy or to every major figure in the fourteen centuries of Islamicate philosophy. However, there was considerable agreement on the fundamentals, from the more theologically oriented Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149–1209) to the greatest Ḥikma figure of the modern period, Iran's Hādī Sabzavārī (1797–1878 or 1881). I shall draw on a tiny handful of them, while keeping at bay the current habit of viewing person through the prism of personality, ego, *I*, or some such object of experience or empirical investigation. Positive approaches were commonplace in Islamicate learning, but the concept's legal offshoots, its historical trajectory, and the conduct of philosophy itself will all be peripheral to this discussion. Our focus will be on personhood as part of the inquiry into the question of being.

1 Personhood and Existence

Why are there existents at all rather than nothing? This is a legitimate way to consider existence. However, Ḥikma begins with another general but more basic step: the awareness it attributes to the self or soul (*nafs*) *that* there is something. Ḥikma regards neither the "general concept of existence" nor the universal alone as philosophy's point of departure. Rather, the existent (*mawjūd*, or being: *what exists*) qua existent (i.e., existentiality, *mawjūdiyya*), not existence as such or the copula, constitutes the subject matter of First Philosophy or Science (*al-ʿilm al-awwal*). Existentiality—the very *existentness* of the existent—allowed systematic science to ground knowledge in all its branches. Like existence, personhood is equivocal in the sense that no single individual can totally exhaust its meaning, but we shall see that it is also *how* everything is existentiated from self-manifestation's (hidden) source.

That knowledge and existence should be structurally articulated together through this primary, primordial manifestation cannot be indifferent to man. Knowing cannot depend merely on a mental judgment *after* an empirical fact. Qūnawī argues that knowledge "follows" existence "in such a way that no sooner is there existence than there is knowledge, *without any disconnection*."[9] The key word is *tabaʿa* (to follow or be subordinate), a grammatical concept referring to the syntactically subordinate position of one element in a sentence relative to another element, just as it can refer—in a more philosophical vein—to the posteriority of the sentence's syntax itself relative to the essential meaning. These complexities have to resolve themselves into a unity for sheer intelligibility where time does not enter a priori and a posteriori relations.

He took to heart Ibn Sīnā's declaration that man cannot, by dint of his limited faculties, grasp the realities of things complete as simple things.[10] "Of things we know only their properties, concomitants, and accidents," reads Ibn Sīnā's notebook.[11] We only know *that* (*annahā*) they are things that have properties, accidents, and concomitants; in short, the *anniyya* (thatness, haecceity) by virtue of which we know that there is something, its place, and so on, and not the thing in itself, let alone "the reality of the First [Being], the intellect, the soul." The complexity of what we do know poses a problem, because no combination of elements inferred about a thing can amount to the thing itself. Ibn Sīnā uses the incommensurability of the definition and its parts to illustrate that knowledge is not an assemblage of sensory inputs, since only the one yields the one.[12]

Qūnawī further explains that human beings are accustomed to perceiving a thing first in their capacity as already existing beings with

9 Qūnawī, *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ* (Qom, Iran: Āyat-e Ishrāq, 1390 AS), 64–65.

10 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 32.

11 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Taʿliqāt* (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2013), 71 and elsewhere.

12 Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Taʿliqāt*, 62 and 71.

multiple faculties, not according to the *exclusive oneness* (*aḥadiyyatunā*) that makes a person a single entity.[13] The question is how human beings can free themselves of the precepts (*aḥkām*) of multiplicity that taint what they perceive. The staple answer was: by removing the impediments. Perception served, in part, as a model for the wayfarer's path, with both individual and social dimensions. But Qūnawī regards this negative path as the minimum that the one perceiver is capable of without quite procuring the plenary knowledge of a reality in its simplicity. Because the manifold of the faculties is unequal to the complete knowledge-existence of anything, their internal ordering requires a "commanding factor" (*amr*) and a still higher order of self-identity (the thing is the *same* as itself).

Amr, a synonym of *shay'* (thing), indicates that what is known according to its modalities, attributes, and concomitants is the thing itself persisting through all that it manifests of itself and on which its internal structuring depends. The dominance of an *amr* implies that the manifold cannot on its own generate the whole that might represent, mirror-like, *what* the thing—let alone a particular person—is. One cannot inductively gather the relevant cases with the expectation that a judgment will exactly correspond to an object. But *amr* is also the word for "command"—for example, God's single Word, *Be!,* the very utterance said to contain everything.[14] Hence, divine command is to what exists what the commanding factor, more abstractly, is to a thing. Existence denotes the thing as exists in itself, whether that "thing" in its oneness is creation taken as a whole or an individual. However, each thing is said to be manifested according to its own modality and to "return" *as the same thing manifested*. This is how it comes to be known as *this* without implying a perfect logical identity, tautology, or solipsism. It exists at its own level and according to the

13 Qūnawī, *I'jāz*, 32–33.

14 "Our Word to a thing, if We will it, is *that* We say to it, *Be!* and it is" (Qur'ān 16.40).

what that God commanded to *be*, and is properly said to be what it is in itself in this way.

Qūnawī explains the single existence and endurance of conjunctive union (*jamʿ*) according to a diffusion by the conjoining precept of exclusive and existential divine *oneness* (*bi-sarayān ḥukm al-jamʿ al-aḥadī al-wujūdī al-ilāhī*). While this oneness is exclusive to God, it is "relational" inasmuch as it makes things manifest with His presence (*ḥaḍratihi*) through the secret of His will and command. As abstruse as this may sound, one has only to follow its logic. Every thing comes to light self-identically as the thing itself because of the pervasive divine self-manifestation said of presence. Put differently, even with the removal of the contingent world's impediments, man has still to find verification at a station comparable to where God becomes man's "hearing and seeing," the highest station.[15] This station is not God's in His absolute hiddenness but a locus for the highest junction of knowing and existing possible for man. It is in this more basic sense of divine knowing-existing that knowledge is not indifferent to man. Otherwise, the negative immaterial path would not "return" oneself to oneself, as it were, in the form of a new creation.

The two elements of the single, enduring conjunctive relation require no epistemology where a concept has to correspond to an object. Knowledge is most complete for man when the precepts of whatever distinguishes any two things are lifted, in a purely formal sense, through a universal.[16] But this assumes a commanding factor denied to induction, even if every case were to be spoken for in a way that completes the inference. Furthermore, for a thing to be known, the unification or identity (*ittiḥād*) with the noetic object (*al-maʿlūm*) must be transformed from the level where the intermediaries that normally separate the knower from what the knower knows through his

15 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 33.

16 Qūnawī, *Al-Nafaḥāt al-ilāhiyya* (Tehran: Kitābkhaneh-ye Millī-ye Irān, 1426 AH), 33.

or her mental faculties are removed,[17] as when something is perceived or grasped directly without one having to make a judgment about it. Knowledge and existence are said to be united only at the root before the mind distinguishes them.

Consonance (*munāsaba*) recapitulates what is at stake between the two elements (knower and known) in this noetic relation. One illustration is the consonance that fuses meaning and structure with the conveyance of knowledge through words, just as dissonance (*mughāyara*; lit.: otherness, difference), its opposite, signifies ignorance and, beyond knowledge, deficiency of existence. Qūnawī stipulates that consonance is grasped according to the purpose (*maqṣūd*), without which speech is unintelligible. But purpose, an expression of will, is also indicative of the precept that the command assigns to the relation of two elements. The precept of consonance that pervades them makes for their integrated union (*ijtimāʿihā*, a unified wholeness said also of society) and construction (*taʾlīfihā*, or synthesis or composition when composing a sentence).[18]

Elsewhere, he applies this reasoning to the secret (*sirr*, what is innermost about a thing) that connects the rational soul and the human body (a composed mixture) as "opposites." The soul represents the person's furthest limit in simplicity and the mixture the furthest in synthesis. But the connection by which the soul governs the body is "indirect" due to the animating spirit (*rūḥ hayawānī*) between them. It is the spirit's own connection to the natural human mixture (*mizāj ṭabīʿī insānī*) that imparts the permanence needed by the simple soul to govern the composite body as one.[19]

Ṣadrā refined this technical language and put forward a clarified understanding of motion-in-substance (*al-ḥaraka al-jawhariyya*, unity in difference), which concept he sometimes employed to

17 Qūnawī, *Al-Nafaḥāt*, 32.

18 Qūnawī, *Al-Nafaḥāt*, 193.

19 Qūnawī, *Al-Nafaḥāt*, 86.

distinguish what "joins" from what "preserves."[20] The agent of joining (*al-jāmiʿ*) through matter, which serves to particularize, accepts renewal dominated by form and logically precedes what preserves (*al-ḥāfiẓ*). This agent is what readies and predisposes through the primary matter by which the personification of the form is rendered consonant. Each form persists through the matter that moves, according to its own movement. Thus body cannot be identical with soul or person.

2 The Scales of Creation

Al-Rāzī argued that *nafs*, when identified with "I," was neither the whole nor a part of the body.[21] He hoped to avoid juxtaposing the logical ego, soul, or spirit with the matter (body, faculties, or any divisible multiplicity) governed by the soul. But Qūnawī, as mentioned, was, further, relating the soul and body as opposite scales, as if in a balance. Man is both the highest balance and a "natural man" endowed with the faculties, which Ṣadrā calls shadows and a mere likeness of the soul, that orders things and reaches up to *intellective man* and his aspects.[22] In his bodily existence, "person" remains corporeally both the man of the soul (*insān nafsānī*) and the man of the intellect (*insān ʿaqlī*) in a single, continuous identity.[23] But whereas the man of the soul senses external things by superadding forms, the intellective man perceives and judges things through himself (*bi-dhātihi*, his essence) upon seeing through a sight, and so on, doing so consonantly with his essence, not his particular natural instruments. This is necessary for the unity of the agent as simple perceiver to be maintained. Finally, there is the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), who, neither a biological entity nor

20 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 280 and following.

21 Al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000), 7:39.

22 Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fi al-asfār al-arbaʿa* (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍāʾ, 2011), 3:530.

23 Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikma,* 3:531.

just a universal, is the balance insofar as he measures everything and is the measure of everything.[24] As the summit of creation, the Perfect Man in his intermediacy epitomizes and contains all things, since he is God manifested as His *Other*.

Every science is said to possess its own *mīzān* (balance, criterion). But *tathlīth* (triplicity)[25]—the basic principle of weighing on a balance—helps clarify how the simple *nātiq* (rational, speaking) soul relates to the composite body. It operates according to the widely accepted view that the first odd number (*fard*) is three, one being the true "origin and beginning" of number.[26] *Fardiyya* (oddness, distinct-individuality) is to existentiation (*ījād*) and coming-to-be (*takwīn*) what weighing or inquiry is to an outcome. That three should be the first odd number "means that everything existential is in itself built upon *fardiyya*"; unlike the pure one, *fard* signifies that a thing is considered separately from another.[27] The unfolding of the triplicity presents existentiation from a single source as the emanation of the one mediated by what lies opposite to it. The first odd number also signals the structuring of existentiation. The combinatory dynamics according to which this structuring has been elucidated explains Islamicate philosophy's interest in the rules of grammar, from which it derived many of its concepts connected with existentiation.[28]

Qūnawī uses *fardiyya* to argue that between every existing thing and its other, there is always a real divine factor (*amr ḥaqīqī ilāhī*) requiring *commonality* (*ishtirāk*); after all, perfect knowledge depends on the identity with what is known.[29] Moreover, only other factors account

24 This is how the maxim attributed to Protagoras was understood in Ḥikma.

25 See Shaker, *Modernity,* 423–445; see 434–435 for a translation of Ibn ʿArabī's authoritative passage describing triplicity.

26 Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ al-Qāshānī ʿalā Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Al-Ḥalabī wa Shurakāʾuhu, 1987), 171.

27 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ al-Qāshānī ʿalā Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 169.

28 For a detailed study of the linguistic origin of Ḥikma's concepts, see Shaker, *Modernity,* 155–195.

29 Qūnawī, *Al-Nafaḥāt*, 32.

for the distinction of a thing from what it is not.[30] Any consonances between the thing and its other pertain to attribution, point of emergence (like the "breath" of speech originating in the chest), level, and—when the thing and what is consonant with it are temporally circumscribed—time. But the divine factor remains the unconditional conjoining manifestation (*muṭlaq al-tajallī al-jamʿī*) rooted in the Absolute Reality/Truth (*al-Ḥaqq al-muṭlaq*, God in relation to no other), based on the allocation of "rights."[31] Therefore, the divine self-manifestation permeates the innermost of every thing. It is the cause of the thing's existence and the very secret of "togetherness" (*sirr al-maʿiyya*).[32] Intrinsic to the isthmus between God and what is other, togetherness is how the presence of the First Being manifests Himself to human beings, who know Him *as* the *God-of*, not as He knows Himself. In this respect, knowledge is always that of a relation with a commanding factor. Togetherness points to where the center point of Qūnawī's Five Presences of manifestation lies equidistantly from all its possible personifications, God's Other. Qūnawī's elucidation of the presences, which he compares according to level of universality, indicates just how far the old discourse on universals and the particulars had already been surpassed.

The two aspects delineated so far, reflecting the rootedness of the unconditional conjoining manifestation in the Absolute Reality, are so related that the conjoining (*jāmīʿ*) manifestation originates every

30 Commonality relates things (*umūr*) to God and His other at the level of isthmus. It is thus accepted according to a distinguishing precept for every state, level, time, abode, and locus of appearance and according to the originator of the precept (*ḥākim*) (see Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 92). The reality of every created being attains its existence conditionally through what distinguishes it from God and is proper to it. Its own precept refers to what it has in common with God at the level of isthmus, congruently with the *right* of God (*ḥaqq al-Ḥaqq*), who preserves both His lordship and the right of creation's servanthood. Ibn ʿArabī postulated three "rights": that of the Creator, that of people, and another which people arrogate for themselves; Ibn ʿArabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1911), 1:33. See Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 92.

31 See note 30 on "rights." Qūnawī, *Sharḥ al-arbaʿīn ḥadīthan* (Istanbul: Marmara University, 1990), 18.

32 Qūnawī, *Al-Nafaḥāt*, 33.

subsequent manifestation qua *other* from a root divine hiddenness. But they are not identical at the *level* of other, much less of a particular other; no person is "completed" in this sense. Conjoining articulates the connection with the Absolute Truth/Reality (*al-Ḥaqq*) whereby the Perfect Man occupies the center point of divine presential manifestation *by virtue of* what encompassing hidden and stable secret is apportioned to each person. Perfection (or completion) demands that the precepts of delimitation (*aḥkām taqyīdiyya*) gathered in the person be lifted, precisely by way of *togetherness with* the stable or permanent self-identical individuality (*ʿayn thābita*), which occurs between the level of God and that of the precepts.[33] Although a stable entity of mere possibility, this individuality lies opposite the divine manifestation, of which it is both a locus and delimitation before it passes on into existence.[34]

Essential togetherness (*maʿiyya dhātiyya*) consolidates the highest attainable level of understanding by binding the worlds of hiddenness and of beholding (*ʿālam al-ghayb wa'l-shahāda*) self-identically along this path of perfection.[35] The thing's own secret cannot lead to the solipsism of a reified self-identity. Nothing returns to itself as either an infinite circle or a mentally delimited individual, since it returns to its source in divine existence. A formal identity of two entities in the manner of a direct correspondence only pits two elements in a relation that mimics the equation A = A. Yet, the kind of "opposition" we are examining here between incommensurables—for example, soul and body, what is defined and the definition's parts, the structure of the proposition and what it purports to convey—must still be an identity of sorts. In *becoming* A, the A can be A, A′, or an entirely different B. Insisting that A′ and B are not A would not admit *being* in the *becoming*, nor the survival of the single person through change and growth.

33 Qūnawī, *Sharḥ*, 18.

34 Qūnawī, *Sharḥ*, 18.

35 Qūnawī, *Sharḥ*, 19.

Ṣadrā delineates this twofold existence of existents by way of a single primary, regulating governance or order (*al-tadbīr al-awwal*) that produces, primarily, the emanation of existence from the Necessary Real, relative to which passive receptivity is extrinsic, and secondarily, the structured coming-to-be that "stands upon the appropriateness of the receptacle."[36] Therefore, the existents exist together within existence upon receiving "being after being," in congruence with the specificity of "origination after origination," though the Maker actualizes their genesis as a graduated movement of renewal and preparation. Each existent (intellects, souls, nature, matter, etc.) "returns," he says, as if circling around itself as a body, form, plant, and then animal with a soul—not in an infinite continuum but as a new creation at every stage of renewal.

Instead of being connected to their source as enclosed circles, human beings, whose end is to become "man endowed with intellect," find perfection by degrees of intensity and existence, just as they do through their "love for the whole." The second aspect of origination, then, is why, in the divine existentiation, they exist in themselves in keeping with that being they receive from God and not something else.[37] Each is properly said both to exist in himself and to emanate from God. There is no need for the seeker to deny his or her human characteristics just to be near God; on the contrary, existence is light and life in all its shades and intensities, forms and matters, souls and bodies, thanks to the incontestable fact of renewal.[38] Every living being in this world has a self in another world (*nafs fī ʿālam ākhar*), an intellect in a third world, and so on, and then down to the opaque earth, the most distant body.[39] This does not imply that the self has multiple persons; the "selfhood of a self" (*nafsiyyat al-nafs*) merely indicates its

36 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 276.

37 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 247 and 249.

38 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 251.

39 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 252.

manner of existence, not a new essential relation with every change.[40] One person persists through every change and transformation and is resurrected in the Afterlife.

3 The Relative Being of Togetherness

Ḥikma developed a far more nuanced distinction between existence and essence than the Scholastics' Latin mistranslations of the Arabic texts permitted on the question of attribution. Ṣadrā reaffirmed the primacy (*aṣala*) of existence over essence in his critique of Suhravardī, who appeared to say the contrary, that "existence" can be affirmed like an attribute. However, they seem to have been employing "existence" in difference senses, because they both used "light" in the primary sense to elucidate the same fundamental problem of existence intended by Ṣadrā.

Qūnawī describes the "five root presences" that recapitulate all exteriorizations, including human perception, from what lies hidden according to relations of "opposition" by referring them back to their causal source in the transcendent knowledge of God.[41] These presences are "object-related" only in respect of their otherness in the transcendence of divine self-identity. (God knows Himself as He is in Himself.) Their unfolding according to relations of priority and posteriority begins from the hiddenness of God's knowledge (normally identified with His essence and therefore existence) and ipseity. Thus, subordinate to His ipseity is the unification of the worlds of beholding qua manifestation, imagination (closest to the senses), spirit (closest to the hidden), and the absolute imaginal (*ʿālam al-mithāl al-muṭlaq*), which lies between the absolute hidden and the world of beholding. Serial time is understood by way of encompassment in the tripartite enfolding of being/time, first stipulated by Ibn Sīnā and finely developed by

40 Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikma*, 3:540.

41 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 61. On the Five Presences, see Shaker, *Modernity,* 144 and following.

Mīr Dāmād (d. 1630), Ṣadrā's teacher. This conception lends itself well to a polarity between the world human beings live in (beholding) and the Hereafter that gives human existence its meaning.

Structural priority can be illustrated with rules that are elsewhere applied to both the apophantic as-statement and the relation of the whole to its parts. Suhravardī used the distinction between knowing a thing inductively through its constituents and knowing it in the structural form of integrated union (*ijtimāʿ*) to account for the anteriority of one part relative to another based on what is already manifestly known compared to the thing being explained.[42] One cannot communicate what a sun is, he wrote, by referring to a star thanks to which there is day, when day itself cannot be known without the sunrise. This pattern is observable in the structural relations of the apophantic as-statement in Aristotle. Ḥikma derived the philosophical concept of *tabaʿiyya*—originally referring to the syntactic position of the superordinate (*matbūʿ lahu*) relative to the subordinate clause (*tābiʿ*)—from a similar line of thought in order to establish the hermeneutic logic (*ta'wīl*) of what lay at the heart of the preoccupation with divine speech as the "lettered" act of creation: the single existentiating word *Be!*[43] This was philosophy, not a separate branch of exegesis or linguistics. Thinking's every distinction had to return to the divine root that gave rise to both unity and the manifold. While analogy, metaphor and other formal devices were not "contentless," as syllogistic logic has been described, they still proved unequal to settling the origin of knowledge.

If knowledge and being "meet" in the hidden self-identity of the Absolute, then their source must be ulterior to the relative oneness of each manifestation. The commanding factor is said to be ulterior

42 Suhravardī, "*Kitāb ḥikmat al-ishrāq*," *Majmūʿeh-ye muṣannafāt* (Tehran: Académie Impériale Iranienne de Philosophie, 1977), 2:18–19.

43 *Ta'wīl* is a type of exegesis. As the intense verbal noun of *awwal* (first), the word implies returning to what is first and, in this context, literally seeking to return to an original source meaning.

when it originates "above" or "outside" the manifold assumed in the case of the emanation of intellects and the continuum in human perfection, since no incremental movement can reach the essence of truth on its own. To Alexander of Aphrodisias and Ibn Sīnā, the ulterior was the transcendent. On the question of conjunction with the Active Intellect, the consensus from al-Fārābī onward in Ḥikma was for an outside origin.

"Outside" does not mean that disembodied phantoms, not persons, know the realities of things. The pregiven nature of persons is hugely significant, but their permanence, oneness, and existent substantiality are not posited on their own before people live and perceive. "Substantiality" here is the concept that affirms the human being's survival as a single person, despite growth, change, and the exchange of attributes in this and the next world.[44] While each person learns self-consciously of his own substance, he cannot be a *rational, speaking* (*nāṭiq*) substance without also being aware of what lies exterior to him (*al-khārij*).[45] For Ṣadrā, the concomitances one derives about anything, including oneself, flow from an existence proper to such an articulate substance (*jawhar nuṭqī*), for which everything begins with the discovery *that* one is a thinking and speaking being and *that* there is an outside. "Living being" has its own concomitants (sense perception, vegetative power of growth, and the corporeality of natural extension and substantiality by which it exists bodily). It—not quiddity (*māhiyya*, "What is it")—refers back to the single immaterial entity due to which the thing exists *in actu* as a single act of existence.[46] Ṣadrā asserts: "Although when analyzed mentally existence is not the quiddity, it is by the same token [the quiddity's] source (*ʿaynuhā*). The external precepts and effects of [the quiddity] all return to existence."[47] This is why he takes the purely mental distinction

44 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 346.
45 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 238.
46 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 239.
47 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 242.

between essence and existence by the horns and bestows principality upon existence.

Man is able to behold a self-identical existent thing because his thinking (*fikr*) is itself an attribute of the commanding spirit (*quwwa rūḥāniyya*).[48] Affirming thinking as an attribute is not, therefore, to deny that it discharges its own functions. Ṣadrā called the ipseity ("he" qua other) of existence the most fitting of "properties" for thinking, which thinks by entifying and personifying.[49] Ipseity is otherness, not the ineffable I aware of itself unmediated by any concept. In the end, the distinctions between universal and particular and between knowledge and existence allow thinking to affirm *that* "what exists" (*al-mawjūd*) is and *that* it exists in such-and-such a mode as a unity of what it purports to be about. But mental *that*-distinctions alone do not constitute a knowledge of the "realities of things" (i.e., as they are in themselves).

4 The Floating Man

Al-Fārābī's initial re-posing of the central questions of being for *Falsafa* allowed Ibn Sīnā to construct his famous "floating man" argument. The first self-awareness, goes the argument, is *that* something exists—its *anniyya* (haecceity, thatness). Picture a hypothetical person deprived of all sense input. Even without limbs this person remains the same individual, capable of perception as that individual. Self-conscious, he or she knows *that* something exists, if only its self—*nafs* (self) is meaningless without the "awareness" that adumbrates the *anniyya*. The argument seeks to establish that the conscious *self* can neither be reduced to its own senses nor to another's sensing of it as an individual. Man is said to be aware of himself through himself. This is why Suhravardī

48 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 299; Qunawī, *I'jāz*, 30.

49 Ṣadrā, "*Kitāb al-mashā'ir*," *Min muṣannafāt Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī* (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍā', 2011), 291.

asks how someone could possibly refer this awareness back to himself by intellecting the whole through its parts.[50] Self-awareness (*shuʿūruhu bi-dhātihi*) persists separately from any awareness of the bodily parts, nor can it be had through an *image* of oneself to oneself posing as I-ness (*anāʾiyya*).[51] Self-awareness is of a single person, but that person is not the one that any image could represent.

But though this image differs from the *I* no less than any he, even as a he-representation it can only be what one perceives of one's *own* I-ness, not something else. Self-perception cannot be higher than one's self (*lā yafḍul ʿalā dhātihi*). It is the manifestation of that self—not merely its abstraction from matter, as Suhravardī understood the Peripatetics to be saying.[52] Thingness (*al-shayʾiyya*) cannot simply be superadded, least of all to the one aware (*al-shāʿir*) of his self through himself; he is the selfsame manifested person, a light unto himself and thus also a pure light (*nūran maḥḍan*).[53] Man's perceptiveness (*mudrikiyyatuka*) of other things may be posterior to his self (*tābiʿ nafsihi*), but by assuming himself to be an existence perceiving its self (*dhātuka anniyya tudrik nafsahā*), he falsely infers that the self, being prior to the perception, must be unknown.[54] The sentient person is the light that appears according to its own reality and what makes manifest its *other* through itself. The self depends on a higher, preponderant factor (*murajjiḥ*) for its existence, because the beginning of existing things (*fa-mabdaʾ al-anniyyāt*) is a living, existing giver of perception (*anniyya ḥayya darrāka*), the most perfect of existents and "second to none."[55]

Al-Rāzī holds that *nafs* is the thing to which one points whenever one says "I," it being irrelevant whether "I" is simple or composed.[56]

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50 Suhravardī, "*Kitāb al-mashāʿir waʾl-muṭāraḥāt*," *Majmūʿeh*, 1:403.

51 Suhravardī, "*Kitāb al-mashāʿir waʾl-muṭāraḥāt*," *Majmūʿeh*, 1:404; Suhravardī, *Kitāb ḥikmat*, 2:111.

52 Suhravardī, *Kitāb ḥikmat*, 2:114.

53 Suhravardī, *Kitāb ḥikmat*, 2:112–113.

54 Suhravardī, *Kitāb ḥikmat*, 2:114.

55 *Kitāb al-mashāʿir waʾl-muṭarāḥāt*, 1:403–404.

56 Al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr*, 7.38–39.

But even if extendedness is not one of man's *constituent* attributes, this is not all Suhravardī intends. Every human being knows that he has a self (*dhāt*, essence) that knows itself and its (internal) states, which remain hidden from others.[57] But that he is his own individual self is insoluble within the material world, which is incommensurate with the factor (*amr*) that determines what a human being is. He may be a substance with extension as a property like any other object, a soul (*nafs*), or a will, and still no act attributed to him in this world can establish what he is.[58] Yet he grasps intelligible things, learns and teaches by virtue of his single soul. Man is a single essence with respect to the wholeness (*min jumlatihā*) to which these aspects of the *anniyya* of personhood together merely point as the essence of humanity—aspects that distinguish one person from another according to height, color, and so on.

Quoting Ibn Sīnā's posthumous *Kitāb al-taʿlīqāt*, Ṣadrā contends that a thing is affirmed because "we know that it is *specified* (*annahu makhṣūṣ*) on account of a property or set of properties, and we know of this thing other properties by the intermediary of what we knew first and began with; whereupon we reach the cognizance of the thing's *anniyya*."[59] This happens with respect to the soul, place, and whatever thing is affirmed as *anniyya*, which makes them known not in themselves (*dhawātihā*) but from their relations to what one already knows, an accident or a concomitant. Hence, Ibn Sīnā holds that in the definition of man as a rational-articulate animal (*ḥayawān nāṭiq*), the differentia is not a general concept one may derive from the senses or a product of induction: it captures man's substance as a being of individual essence and reality, because it refers to that existence which properly belongs to the human being as a rational-articulate being.[60] Ṣadrā

57 Suhravardī, *Kitāb ḥikmat*, 2:111.

58 Ibn Sīnā, "*Al-Manṭiq*," *Al-Shifāʾ* (Cairo: Al-Idārah al-ʿĀmmah li'l-Thaqāfa, n.d.), 7:29.

59 Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikma*, 1:269.

60 Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikma*, 1:270.

agrees that "sensate person endowed with speech" is not the differentia indicating that the animal has an ipseity which perceives and moves.[61] The differentia is not an attribute artificially attached to the selfsame existence of an animal. Differentia *is* existence and, consequently, the personification and ipseity of each person.[62] Rather than define a person, however, personification (*tashakhkhuṣ*) points like a sign. "Person" clarifies how the soul, whose end is not this world but the next, moves through its states and phases. Ibn ʿArabī explains that the image of man as a single person assumes various states each of which has a form. As we saw with Suhravardī, none of these is what a person is in himself. For "between you and those forms lies a veil; therefore, they are disclosed to you all the while that you are in the whole (*jumla*) of he who has a form in it. You perceive the totality of what is in the whole when the veil is lifted with a single gaze."[63]

5 From Oneness to the Proliferation of Language

That a created being existed *in its own right*, over and above its myriad parts, carried logical complications whose resolution in some universal qua "individual," like a Platonic Idea, was rejected by everyone. The main aspiration of the Ḥukamā'(philosophers), contained in the authoritative tradition "I was his seeing and his hearing," was the togetherness that made its paradoxical appearance in the singularity of the individual person, just as it did for creation taken as a whole. The Peripatetic approach to the particular was rejected because it could not determine the truth of "this thing," any more than logic decided on its own what a proposition meant. For its part, personhood refers to how what is, is. Only after this is its singular oneness adduced for rational analysis and synthesis. As in utterance, the

61 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 233.

62 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 235; Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikmah*, 2:406.

63 Ibn ʿArabī, *Al-Futūḥāt*, 1:162.

inherent complexity of rational analysis and synthesis depends on the secondary unities formed with the structural features that properly belong to what is.

The intrinsic complexity of utterance is why conveying what a thing is, even as an independent substance, tends to multiply the things said about it and obscure its singular reality. As the devices needed for communication multiply, they become more opaque. Every mediation leads to the dilution of the effect or appearance, which is relatively "dark" in the familiar metaphor of light. On the other hand without mediation no individual, whole or structured union (*ijtimāʿ*) would come to light; the locus of divine manifestation in the intermediate imaginal world (*ʿālam al-mithāl*) would remain hidden, never reaching external existence.

The rule that no two things can be identical in every respect (*ittiḥād*), today enshrined as Leibniz's Law based on a mathematical proof, was commonly invoked to distinguish the *ittiṣāl* ("coincidence" or conjunction) from the *ittiḥād* (union) with the Active Intellect. However, truth/reality (*ḥaqīqa*) was modeled on the unity of knower and known that was first mediated by the lower unity of the common sense. Suhravardī points out that "all the senses *return* to one sense organ, the common sense (*ḥiss mushtarak*), and the whole returns in the *organizing* light (*nūr mudabbir*) to a single power" called the intellect.[64] He uses the apophantic as-proposition because the dynamic complexity of meaning and structure reveals something about what is philosophically at stake, not just about human perception.[65] Ḥikma associated permanence with intuition (*badīha*), which stabilizes concepts. But since what is permanent and grasped in the proposition compared well also with the endurance (*biqāʾ*) of person; thus, the "impermanence" of language—the proliferating manifold—called for the "annihilation"

64 Suhravardī, *Kitāb ḥikmat*, 2:213.

65 See Suhravardī, *K. ḥikmat*, 2:18 and following. Also, al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-jamʿ bayn raʾyay al-ḥakīmayn*, ed. A. N. Nader (Beirut: Dar El-Machreq, 1968), 87–88.

(*fanā'*) of the personal faculties' multiplicity before the absolute majesty of God.

In his discussion on technical language, the multiplication of which renders the object of thinking opaque, Qūnawī deemed facultative thinking itself incapable of clinching a perfect identity between expression and the reality of a thing.[66] The reasons for this incommensurability are somewhat different for logic. Given that intelligibility is conditional upon purpose and will in the conveyance of meaning, he notes that the excessive expansion of expressions vitiates the purpose of what the speaker wants to convey. God speaks through the "lettered" forms of His existentiating speech exteriorized from what is hidden in Him. Exteriority (*ẓāhir*) finds its root in interiority (*bāṭin*). Likewise, human words are formed and articulated from "inside" the person who expresses the *what*—technically represented by the quiddity, whose form Qūnawī likens to that of words. While they render meaning opaque, all "devices of conveyance" (like words) are also loci of appearance. Qūnawī means by them the "matters" that are made up of the simple and composite forms; the letters that make up a word; thinking and other faculties; articulations and conceptions. They are, however, analogues of a single reality that serve as the substrates by which the human being realizes the attribute of knowledge.

When the relation of consonance between the knower and what the knower seeks to know is stable (*thābita*) and proximate, the number of devices diminishes until there is no need for intermediaries. For this direct apprehension to occur through the consonance proper to their relationship, there must be a transmutation or transformation of the two realities' identity (*istiḥālat al-ittiḥād*) at the station of exclusive singular oneness (*al-aḥadiyya*)—two realities because the exchange is between two interlocutors, speaker and spoken to. This transmutation

66 Qūnawī, *I'jāz*, 65.

is itself a "return" to a more originary level. But a foreknowledge of the object sought—logically represented by the givenness of the premises in a syllogism, whose conclusion is that this is the same object—cannot merely correspond to an object, since that would imply a doubling. So, Qūnawī took it upon himself to show how realities relate by way of a single, undivided existence. As the elements of existentiating speech, however, one reality is subordinate to another in an order that is subsumed and encompassed by a precept proper to their own structure. But while one element of the sentence is merely subordinate to its superordinate, the superordinate realities, as causes and intermediaries, stand for the isthmus occupied by the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the center point and intermediary.

"Know that it is God's great wisdom with the creation of man from stocks and elements," Ṣadrā declared, "to have produced in him the contents of language (*al-mawḍūʿāt al-laghawiyya*), and the reason for this is that he depends on association and collaboration with others of his kind for his worldly livelihood."[67] Language enabled Ḥikma to move beyond the Aristotelian definition of man as a "rational animal." It transformed man into a being whose thinking faculty was an attribute that partook of the active, commanding spirit pervading and stabilizing his being throughout change, where thinking was not simply an attribute. From al-Fārābī onward, human enlightenment came consciously to be depicted in terms of both its self-interiority and the metahistory of a reflective, communicative, and collaborative being. Ḥikma affirmed the inherent purpose of man's personhood in this manner. Today, we continue to acknowledge the unprecedented legacy of the natural and mathematical sciences that Islamicate civilization bequeathed to us, without always seeing the philosophical framing of being and knowing in which those sciences were rooted.

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67 Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikma*, 3:535.

6 To Each Level of Being Its Right

If no juridical interpretation can fully capture personhood, as was often underlined, why then did Ḥikma bother to discuss the right of man, the right of God, and the root that binds them together?

Man's right (*ḥaqq*)—that of God's creation—belongs to, first, an agent responsible for his actions; second, man and woman created as an irreducible pair; and third, a single human *self*. Two often-quoted Qur'anic passages illustrate these distinctions: "He it is who created you from a single self [*nafs wāḥida*, in the feminine], and made that self's pair [*zawjahā*, her mate, the feminine for which would be *zawjatahā*] of like nature, that this her pair may dwell with her" (Q. 7.189). In another passage, man is a multitude: God "created from that self its pair and spread out men and women from that self" (Q. 4.1). Ibn ʿArabī caught, in this enigmatic emergence, pairing, joining, and dispersal, the scent of the divine self-identity by which everything returns to God as *one*, in a new creation, through a divine yearning. He wrote, "God wanted to see the essences (*aʿyānahā*) of His beautiful names, which are without count; or if you wish you may say, *to see His own essence upon a joining that encompasses the thing as a whole*, which attribute is existence and through which His own secret is disclosed to Him. The thing's seeing of itself through itself is not the same as its seeing of itself in another thing as if in a mirror."[68]

Note the similarity with Suhravardī in Ibn ʿArabī's use of existence as an attribute. The unconditionality of the divine essence is clearly assumed. Something of it is discernible in personhood that also coheres with the dependence of a person qua created being—God is said to *be He who is independent of, or al-Ghanī*. Ibn Sīnā deciphered *shakhṣ*, in the manner of *Falsafa*, by distinguishing between animal as abstract animal without any other condition and animal as abstract animal with the condition that no other thing exists.[69] Taken with

68 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1980), 48.

69 Ibn Sīnā, "*Al-Ilāhiyyāt*," *Al-Shifāʾ*, 1:204.

the condition that no other thing exists, "animal" subsists only in the mind; only the animal without this condition exists concretely in itself as a separate reality, subject to no condition external to it. Animal qua immaterial animality, then, exists concretely only as one among other ones within the limits of its own oneness. Although oneness in this case is superadded to animality, it is unlike other related concomitants. Whether or not this abstracted animal exists as a separate individual is irrelevant, he says; he consigns Plato's pronouncements to that effect to mere speculation. Every one of its many individuations is that self-same (*huwa huwa*) abstract animal and identical with what it is. No individual thing exists by essence or functions as an essential identity. Taken with its accidents, "animal" is a "natural thing"; whereas in its essence the simple nature (*al-ṭabīʿa*) is entailed whose existence is prior to what occurs naturally and compositely.[70] But essentiality in this second sense refers to the thing whose existence is specified only *as* a divine existence,[71] such that the cause of the thing's existence insofar as it is animal is the *ʿināya* (God's overseeing of order). That something has matter and is this or that individual is due to its *particular* nature (*al-ṭabīʿa al-juzʾiyya*) within the *ʿināya*.

The model of intellective perception based on the idea that man is both the perceiving subject and the object of contemplation renders personhood perplexing. The complexity assumed about this relation is incompatible with both man's oneness with himself and his oneness with the thing perceived. But relation fuses two things and itself as the third, in this case as the unity of knower, known, and knowledge. The problem of the one-and-many has no egress outside this philosophical grasp of relation. *Ulūhiyya* (Godness or divinity) is one such relation—Godness is the *God-of* taken as He who is independent *of* everything (*ghanī ʿan al-ʿālamīn*), where independence is a relation by virtue of

70 Ibn Sīnā, "*Al-Ilāhiyyāt*," *Al-Shifāʾ*, 1:204–205.

71 Ibn Sīnā, "*Al-Ilāhiyyāt*," *Al-Shifāʾ*, 1:205. Not unlike in the as-statement, which displays a similar dynamic.

the absolute transcendence of unconditionality.[72] Consequently, man, who lies between God and God-qua-other as the summit of creation, is enjoined to rise to the level of the giver of perception (*al-darrāk*), not just that of a passive perceiver (*dārik*). That level, Ṣadrā says, is where "every perception is by way of the unification of the perceiver and the perceived, and the intellect which perceives all things *is* all things"[73] The *darrāk* is not a fixed substance indifferent to movement or the person, whose ipseity and identity emerge from relative hiddenness. The giver of perception presages the noetic and existential order manifested as a single act of creation.

Ṣadrā calls man "substance," intending it only as a mental concept that refers to the mental existence (*wujūd dhihnī*) of the self. This is the mental existence that everyone calls the *I* but which is the conceptual *he* of an existing entity and therefore the other.[74] Echoing Ibn ʿArabī, he writes that within the compass of the human soul, God created between *I* and *he* the capacity to originate the forms otherwise hidden to the sense organs.[75] Such forms occur without mediation when each is, in itself, the selfsame occurrence, like the forms of the existents relative to the Creator (*al-Bāriʾ*) without having to embody the Creator. Thus, the soul contains inside it a world that properly belongs to it (*ʿālam khāṣṣ*), and mentally comprises this world's substances, attributes, spherical bodies, elements, corporeal species, and immaterial persons. Every human being possesses a single, complete world that no one else can take an active part in organizing.[76]

Because an attributable act is itself a kind of existence, the existentiality ascribed to an action returns to its point of origination in existence without the doubling that attends every conceptual self-identity.

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72 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 104.

73 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 328.

74 Ṣadrā, *Al-Mabdaʾ waʾl-maʿād*, 301.

75 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 344.

76 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 347.

But when it already exists, every act is what it is in itself according to its own ipseity. Existence means just this: that something exists and that it has an ipseity and a particularization and personhood.

By the same token, Ṣadrā says, one writes by the attribute of writing, speaks by the ability to compose speech, and so on. Furthermore, the existence by which "person" is said to exist is what is personified and individualized in itself.[77] Thinking takes ipseity as the most fitting property of existence, where *he* and *I* perceived as others become interchangeable.[78] It counts on distinctions to think existence according to ipseity in such a way that, through existence, everything personified is personified, everything happening happens, everything entified is entified and specified according to its own essence. These self-identities remain those of otherness, however, so no intellectual delimitation of the Reality of God can correspond to Him as He is in Himself. Knowledge within the intellect cannot correspond to the thing in itself that it purports to be about, so long as the intellection and delimitation are personified conceptually by the one intellectualizing.

7 Personification

What is said to exist is a personification and develops through phases and degrees (*mutaṭawwir bi-aṭwārihi wa darajātihi*), each of which has its own form.[79] In this way, every existence may be viewed in its particularization within the continuum according to priority and posteriority, perfection and deficiency, dependence and independence; or according to material attributes culled from the matters that comprise the concomitants of the material person (*lawāzim al-shakhṣ al-māddī*) and the signs pointing to that person. Each kind of existence occurs at a station that sustains it prior to the matters and preparations (for the reception of God's

77 Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-mashā'ir*, 293.
78 Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-mashā'ir*, 291.
79 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 138.

attributes). Material existences cease completely upon the death of the body. But since absolute existence is the principle (*mabda'*, beginning) of everything, the most comprehensive and most self-evident of all things, it gives rise to something by which the existence of the thing is the very fact that it is a thing.[80]

Ṣadrā uses all this to show that the personification of a thing pertains to the thing's material and immaterial particular existence, where attributes flow from personhood.[81] The body and soul owe their personhood to the soul's endurance, with "some matter" but regardless of the change in magnitude, place, and so on, up to the Day of Return (or Resurrection).[82] The same person survives change from moment to moment because the active soul's "form" is preserved (*inḥifāẓ*). *Tashakhkhuṣ* can mean "personification" or "particularization." The latter holds even for each of the body's members; it is preserved qua one of "his" members, since as *tashakhkhuṣ* it conforms with instrumentality and with any particular body alongside others like it.

Sabzavārī avails himself of Ṣadrā's separation of personification from *imtiyāz* (distinction) and *takhaṣṣuṣ* (specification) to emphasize that when existence is said to be personified in itself in phases, it must consist of levels and degrees, not individuals and persons. Self-personification (*al-tashakhkhuṣ nafsī*) does not refer to a universal implicit in another universal.[83] On the other hand distinction is relational (*iḍāfī*), like *takhaṣṣuṣ*; both occur through universals.[84] That said, distinguishing one level of existence from the other does not contradict the single reality of existence as "an inclusive *one* (*wāḥidatan*), a singular *one* (*waḥdatan*) in respect of right (*ḥaqqatan*) and reality (*ḥaqīqatan*)."

80 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 343–344.

81 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 344.

82 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 346.

83 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 223.

84 Sabzavārī commentary in Ṣadrā's *Al-Shawāhid*, 451.

Accordingly, then, man reflects the vertical levels of descent according to nature, soul, heart, spirit, secret, hiddenness; and the horizontal levels of ascent (the four journeys Ṣadrā used to organize his magnum opus, *al-Ḥikma*) that include the states of the soul and the body. These distinctions do not undermine singular personhood, and the specification of each level need not itself personify it, since specification as such is not personification. For example, while the level of "maturity" in a human being is distinct from that of "youth," one does not say that maturity is a personification, else the youth would grow into another person on reaching maturity.

In the end, one may speak of the distinction of person (*al-imtiyāz al-shakhṣī*), provided that personification is understood by way of existence. Whereas distinguishing something does not personify it, the thing's personification is its selfsame existence, since every existence is personified according to itself and no other.[85] And what depends on no other thing to distinguish it is not general in a sense that might require abstraction. Any number of individuals can partake of the generality on the pattern of the single concept that subsumes its own particularizations. The existence and personification of the thing are related to the quiddity, to which they are prior only in the manner of the differentia to the genus.[86] Indeed, the primacy and priority of existence personified in itself signifies that it is the quiddity itself *in concreto*, though he says this is not easily discernible by the mind.[87] A relation of priority contains two aspects: an intellected oneness and a multiplicity of change (without which there is no time, which implies a kind of priority).[88] Distinguishing "person" requires the ground by grace of which the thing's personification accords with its connection to real existence (*bi-irtibāṭihi ilā al-wujūd al-ḥaqīqī*)—this is deemed

85 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 223 and 227.

86 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 223.

87 Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-mashā'ir*, 303.

88 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 219.

the beginning and principle of every thing (*mabda' kull shay'*).[89] The thing's personification is the thing itself according to the cause that gives existence to the thing, where existence is the selfsame personification and cause that personifies.[90]

Clearly, the relationality in this formulation of self-identity is not reducible to A = A; it is that by which *priority* and *posteriority* are exhibited according to the graduated movement called "phasing." Their continuity may be likened to the intensification of color, every instance of which is a personified individual (*fard shakhṣī*), which in turn exists as a temporal continuity from beginning to end. The two limits of intensification of existence refer to a unity and a range, two sides of the same coin.[91] The person endures through this movement due to the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) in the movement taken as a whole. The continuous *one* has but a single existence, the personification called the personal ipseity (*al-huwiyya al-shakhṣiyya*).[92] Unity is the beginning-to-end of the person's existence where multiplicity in potentia remains a variable.[93]

Rightly discarding the notion that anything created could personify itself, Mīr Dāmād—like Ṣadrā—argues that existence and personification occur at the level of what is personified, whose quiddity is identical to its existence (*anniyyah*), where existence is preposed as an existent.[94] Everything possible by essence finds its personification—separately and distinctly from what is common in existence—with the subsumption of properties and attributes. Fundamentally, though, existence and personification are the same insofar as the Cause of the substance of the thing itself (*fā'il jawhar al-dhāt*)—namely, the

89 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 223 and 227.

90 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid.*, 223–224.

91 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 223 and 228.

92 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 213.

93 Ṣadrā, *Al-Shawāhid*, 229.

94 Mīr Dāmād, *Kitāb al-Qabasāt* (Tehran: Mu'assasah-ye Intishārāt-e va Chāp-e Dānishgāh-ye Tehran, 1998), 152.

Creator of the reality of existence and personification (*jāʿil ḥaqīqat al-wujūd wa'l-tashakhkhuṣ*)—is the "true, unique and one Existent" personified through Himself. Otherwise, personification would have to occur at a level before existence. On the other hand each contingent or possible thing is conceived in the mind as a "doubling" (*muḍāmma*)—composed of pairs like quiddity and haecceity, reality and personification, genus and differentia, given nature and the personified ipseity (*huwiyya tashakhkhuṣiyya*), and ultimately, essence and existence. This doubling has, therefore, to be resolved as a single reality.

In sum, no single, mentally distinguished ipseity can equal what grounds all ipseities. The Maker is alone personified in Himself and, therefore, is the cause of personhood on an order of existence (*shakhṣiyyat niẓām al-wujūd*) that has no like in the contingent world.[95] The Macrocosmic Man—an aspect of the Perfect Man's intermediacy—is thus the most perfect, most complete order, personified according to the divine watchful regulation (*ʿināyatihi al-ūlā bi'l-dhāt*) as the primary purpose (*al-qaṣd al-awwal*, or first intention in logic). Personification into persons consists of the particulars of a perfect, personified, and complete synoptic order, the whole of which totality is the very personhood of the temple that is the Macrocosmic Man (*haykal al-insān al-kabīr*).[96]

8 The Embodiment of MAN

Demonstrating how the human being (*biqā' al-insān*) survives self-transmutation from one moment to another (*tabaddul dhātihi fī kull ān*) is the critical problem that Ṣadrā insisted Ibn Sīnā could not solve by means of theoretical thinking alone.[97] But no discussion of personhood can ignore the social character of the human being, a ubiquitous

95 Mīr Dāmād, *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, 153.

96 Mīr Dāmād, *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, 425.

97 Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikma*, 3:556.

theme from Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī to Ṣadrā, who continued to link wisdom with the collaborative impulse of human beings.[98] The metahistorical account of wisdom extends from its role in the *milla* (community based on religious customs) to its role in urban life, as both the knowledge and authority to govern and the higher systematic sciences. Ibn Khaldūn took al-Fārābī's thinking along these lines to the level of a new "special science," the one for which he has been crowned "the father of social science" in our time.

Rather than focus on the positive features of man, in the manner of social science, Qūnawī the philosopher explores the interlacing of meaning's oneness with the manifold of construction in a philosophical vein, where man appears as he is: a speaking, thinking, collaborating being.[99] The simplest line formation of persons exemplifies the precept of a form for an *ijtimāʿ* (integrated union, society, or group). But *ijtimāʿ* describes only the rudimentary characteristics that belong to an assembly, so Qūnawī outlines the "transformation" that conducts to higher structures according to active-passive movements within the whole (*jumla*). Where one member is comparable to or resembles the other, these movements occur in a comparative *mode* (*kayfiyya mutashābiha*) toward a mode "commixture" (*kayfiyya mizājiyya*), by which the "commixture" of any two realities receives, upon consolidation (*istiqrār*), what it prepares for in species forms (*al-ṣuwar nawʿiyya*).[100] Like a syntactical position, a "comparative" position indicates that one reality "resembles" another, but within the whole group's cause-and-effect movements. These movements exhibit more than one form of perfection. While two realities are well capable of realizing the end of perfection, though, this is not their highest end. Perfection is not an abstraction that the members of society generate willy-nilly; according to Qūnawī's thinking, that would impose

98 Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikma*, 3:535–540.

99 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 75.

100 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz,* 74.

something extraneous rooted in the multiplicity of the contingent world. The precept of the secret of divine ordering (*taswiya ilāhiyya*) has to permeate every form, which is stable, and everything connected to form. This ordering is what consolidates the group consequent upon the movements of perfection.[101]

The interiorization of social being, a cornerstone of Islamicate philosophy from the outset, is recognized as the articulated exteriorization of man's inner personhood in the emergence of this personhood from its divine origin. In other words, human beings articulate their social life and order it interiorly in *a priori* fashion in relation to the products of their cooperation: the machines they manufacture and the buildings they erect.

The human community's primordial source in the union of two orders circumvented any dependence on a disembodied, purely *ethical* distinction between individual and collective persons. Although Ḥikma sharply distinguished itself from ethics, a separate field of practical inquiry, it regarded neither thinking nor existence as indifferent to man. But it is in the divine self-manifestation, permeating as it does every person according to circumstance and time, that the secret of "togetherness" lies. In the end, the togetherness of God with His Other signifies that presential knowledge (*ʿilm ḥuḍurī*, as opposed to representational thought), as Suhravardī called it, by which every human being knows the Knower is the reason for his or her unique individuality.

101 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 74–75.